

Inner Sincerity

Letter from Svami Sadananda Dasa
to Hella 6 May, 1958

Into English: Bengt Lundborg 2010

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Dear Hella, [...]

It seems that the most important aspect of a religious life is forgotten, and on the whole, this happens in the practical structuring of *every* religion. First, one has to become a completely straightforward, honest *human being* – unless this is not already the case – without mental crookedness or deceitfulness; be totally frank. This *inner sincerity* is what allows the essence, the *authentic* in a religion to grow and develop, and as long as this inner sincerity is there, we have “*classic*” religion. A complete acceptance of oneself – be it as a righteous, orderly citizen, a criminal or a saint – with *all* consequences – is the sole prerequisite for a man to be able to lead a life as himself and then really be able to dedicate his life to God. When the inner courage, the earnest, free *daring* is missing from the outset, the entire religious development is doomed to end up in a miserable desire to sneak away, in awful escapism, in mental deformity – and this is the actual degradation to which the individuals and the churches, the sects and the religious organisations have irretrievably given way – in the West as well as in the East.

I have often asked myself how many hard blows of fate shall be needed in order to lead a straying individual who does not know himself onto the right path, i.e., to bring him to himself, and I’m afraid I have to admit that most people are like the tiny “tumblers”¹ we used to play with as children. This is just the way it is with the majority, and the heavy persecutions have in no way helped the churches to find their way back to themselves. And it is even worse in the East: here “humbler than a blade of grass” has turned into

¹ A little doll with a lump of lead at the bottom, so that it always bounces back, always gets on its feet again.

a downright weakness – already *before* one is hit by a blow of fate or is the target of “persecution”, one’s strength is exhausted, has gone up in smoke.

Dear Hella, you must wonder why I write a letter like this. The reason is quite easy to see: to me it appears preferable to present – already from the *beginning* and quite objectively – what the Vedic religion and bhakti is and wants, *without* revealing oneself to the audience or the reader as a follower of this cult and as a result of that – more or less – be forced to justify oneself to people of other world views and religions – and wish to seduce or convince them into adopting a new cult.

The classical Buddhism, e.g., was first presented in this manner to the West, and quite objective accounts, not tied to any personality, have helped many westerners to sincerely worship and love Buddha, *without* externally forming a new cult, without forcing an external dramatic “conversion”. When Buddhistic groups were formed it already went wrong; and where attempts were made to bring East and West closer in the “form” of Western philosophy or comparisons with Christian theology etc. (Otto, Deussen, Dr. Radhakrishnan) all went wrong.

I don’t know if I am explicit enough – I mean – one must *not* involve oneself *personally* – one’s own experiences, emotions etc. – in the presentation of the subject; and this in order to, more or less, also force the listener or the reader, at least for a significant space of time, to remain outside, *personally*. This does not imply that one should be lifeless, intellectual; one should only present the subject itself, and by no means oneself – like *Shukadeva* does, in the ideal case. Only very rarely does he reveal himself clearly, and only the knower of rasa knows where he stands. Therefore: more of accounts, less of confessions. The listener, the reader must remain outside, personally, before he enters of his own accord (without being *forced*, personally). I believe it must end in a catastrophe if one tries in some way to bring the East, or India, closer to the West; one shall describe the *eternal*, and thereby, first of all, what is human on the whole – to the East as well as to the West. [...]

May you carry Krishna’s blessing in Your heart and His strength, which we all need so much.

Always *Sadananda*